

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 007097

FOR DEP ASST SEC ATWOOD FROM VELIOTES

FOL RPT TUNIS 0159 SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO PARIS, USNATO,
USCINCEUR, CINCUSCUSNAVEUR & COMSIXTHFLT DTD 09 JAN 78

QUOTE: C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 0159

USCINCEUR AND CINCUSNAVEUR ALSO FOR POLADS

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS TS
SUBJ: MENZEL BOURGUIBA: TUNISIAN "ASTONISHMENT" AT U.S.
ATTITUDE

REF: TUNIS 0072

1. SUMMARY : ON JANUARY 7 I WAS SUMMONED BY SECRETARY OF
STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS TURKI AND GIVEN A STRONG DEMARCHE
REGARDING U.S. ATTITUDE ON SOVIET FLEET REPAIRS AT MENZEL
BOURGUIBA ARISING FROM RECENT NEA/AFN DISCUSSION WITH TUNISIAN
CHARGE. TURKI SAID HE BELIEVED U.S. UNDER ERRONEOUS IM-
PRESSION SOVIET USE OF MENZEL BOURGUIBA BASED ON ACCORD,
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AGREEMENT OR CONTRACT OF FORMAL WRITTEN NATURE, WHICH HE
DENIED. HE REITERATED KNOWN GOT POSITION AND REPEATED REGRET
U.S. AND WESTERN ALLIED HAVE FAILED TO AVAIL SELVES OF
REPEATED GOT OFFERS TO USE REPAIR FACILITIES. HE
STRESSED APPARENT LACK OF CONGRESSIONAL OPPOSITION TO
GOT EXEMPLIFIED IN ATTITUDES OF HIRC CHAIRMAN ZABLOCKI
AND OTHERS DURING RECENT TUNIS VISIT. IN RESPONSE I

RESTATED OUR BASIC DISSATISFACTION WITH FACT THAT TUNISIA WAS NOW, HOWEVER UNWITTINGLY, CONTRIBUTING TO THE INCREASED OPERATIONAL CAPABILITY OF THE SOVIET MEDITERRANEAN FLEET. END SUMMARY.

2. WITH APOLOGIES FOR BOTHERING ME ON A SATURDAY, BRAHIM TURKI, SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ASKED ME TO COME TO MOFA URGENTLY. UPON ARRIVAL I FOUND HIM IN UNUSUALLY COOL MOOD. HE LAUNCHED AT ONCE INTO AN EXPRESSION OF "ASTONISHMENT" OVER THE CONTENTS OF RECENT REPORT FROM TUNISIAN CHARGE D'AFFAIRES TEKAYA ON THE SUBJECT OF SOVIET FLEET REPAIRS AT MENZEL BOURGUIBA FOLLOWING TALK WITH AFN DIRECTOR. GOT WAS "ASTONISHED" THAT USG IS STILL APPARENTLY UNDER THE MISAPPREHENSION THAT GOT HAS CONCLUDED A FORMAL WRITTEN ACCORD, AGREEMENT OR CONTRACT WITH THE USSR REGARDING THE USE OF SHIP REPAIR FACILITIES AT MENZEL BOURGUIBA. TUNISIAN "ASTONISHMENT" (A WORD REPEATED AT LEAST FIVE TIMES DURING OUR TALK) IS ALL THE GREATER BECAUSE GOT, FROM THE FIRST TIME U.S. RAISED THIS SUBJECT, HAS MADE A CLEAN BREAST OF ITS MOTIVATIONS--PURELY ECONOMIC AND "SOCIO-LOGICAL"-- IN AGREEING ON CASE-BY-CASE BASIS TO ALLOW REPAIRS OF "A NON-MILITARY CHARACTER" TO BE MADE AT MENZEL BOURGUIBA BY SOVIET SHIPS. HE STATED HE WAS AT PRIME MINISTER NOURIA'S SIDE ALL DURING HIS 1977 VISIT TO USSR AND COULD ASSURE ME THAT USSR USE OF MENZEL BOURGUIBA IS BASED ENTIRELY ON SIMPLE ORAL AGREEMENT BY NOUIRA
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WHO STIPULATED THAT REPAIRS WOULD BE AGREED TO ON A CASE-BY-CASE BASIS AND MUST NOT BE OF A MILITARY CHARACTER. EACH CASE IS SUBJECT TO SPECIFIC EXAMINATION AND APPROVAL BY THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE, WHO, SAID TURKI, HAS REJECTED AS MANY APPLICATIONS AS HE HAS APPROVED OVER PAST SIX MONTHS. HE ESPECIALLY STRESSED THE FACT THAT THE SOVIETS HAD NEVER SOUGHT ANY WRITTEN AGREEMENT ON USE OF THE SHIPYARD. TURKI ADDED THAT THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR HAS "PURSUED ME BY TELEPHONE EVEN INTO MY HOME" PRESSING REQUESTS FOR FACILITIES FOR INDIVIDUAL SHIPS WHICH MOD HAS EITHER DELAYED ACTION ON OR REFUSED TO ADMIT.

3. THE SECRETARY OF STATE THEN REVIEWED THE (TO ME) WELL-KNOWN STORY OF GOT'S 10 - 15 YEAR EFFORT TO PROMOTE MENZEL BOURGUIBA'S GREAT POTENTIAL USEFULNESS TO THE WEST: BETHLEHEM STEEL'S LONG-STUDIED AND FINALLY NEGATIVE DECISION IN MID-1960'S NOT TO INVEST IN AND UPGRADE MENZEL BOURGUIBA; FRENCH REFUSAL TO CONTINUE UTILIZING ITS FACILITIES AND A MORE RECENT KRUPP DECISION AGAINST PARTICIPATING THERE. HE DESCRIBED THE HISTORY OF POST-INDEPENDENCE MENZEL BOURGUIBA (FORMERLY FERRYVILLE) WHICH ONCE EMPLOYED 3,000 WORKERS AND THE ECONOMIC DISASTER WHICH HAS BESET THE

COMMUNITY SINCE 1963, OF THE MILLIONS OF DINARS TUNISIA HAS SPENT ON MAKE-WORK PROGRAMS TO KEEP ONLY 800 MEN AND THEIR FAMILIES SOLVENT. THIS CLOSELY FOLLOWED THE LINES OF DEFENSE MINISTER FARHAT'S EXPOSITION TO CODEL ZABLOCKI, WHICH RESULTED IN AN EXPRESSION OF UNDERSTANDING OF THE GOT POSITION FROM THE HIRC CHAIRMAN AND NO EXPRESSION OF OPPOSITION FROM OTHER HIRC MEMBERS OR STAFF PRESENT (REFTEL). TURKI MADE MUCH OF THIS POINT AND AGAIN EXPRESSED "ASTONISHMENT" THAT TUNISIA'S MOTIVES WERE BEING CALLED INTO QUESTION BY DEPARTMENT, WHEN THE U.S. ABOVE ALL OTHERS SHOULD KNOW WHERE TUNISIA'S SYMPATHIES LIE.

4. AFTER THIS, I SAID, I APPRECIATED, AS DID MY GOVERNMENT, THE GOT'S COURTESY AND COOPERATION IN DISCUSSING THIS
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MATTER WITH US AND IN PERMITTING COMSIXTHFLT AND HIS ENGINEERING EXPERTS TO UPDATE OUR KNOWLEDGE OF MENZEL BOURGUIBA'S FACILITIES WHICH FORMED THE BASIS OF OUR RECENT DECISIONS COMMUNICATED BY ME TO EX-FONMIN CHATTY AND DEFENSE MINISTER FARHAT NOT TO USE THE SHIPYARD FOR USN PURPOSES. HOWEVER, I HOPED THE GOT WOULD CONTINUE TO BEAR IN MIND THAT OUR BASIC DISSATISFACTION STEMS FROM THE FACT THAT TUNISIA WAS NOW, HOWEVER, UNWITTINGLY, CONTRIBUTING TO THE INCREASED OPERATIONAL CAPACITY OF THE SOVIET MEDITERRANEAN FLEET, A MATTER OF GREAT IMPORTANCE TO US. I REPEATED TO HIM AS I HAD TO CHATTY AND FARHAT EARLIER THE CONCERN OF THE NATO SECRETARIAT FOR THE POSSIBLE IMPACT ON THE BALANCE OF FORCES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN THAT THIS NEW ADVANTAGE TO THE USSR COULD SIGNIFY.

5. IN REPLY TURKI SAID HE KNEW OF NO OTHER NATO COUNTRY WHICH HAD INDICATED ITS UNHAPPINESS OVER THIS MATTER AND INTERRUPTED OUR CONVERSATION TO CALL HIS DIRECTOR FOR EUROPE AND AMERICA MEJDOUB TO ASK WHETHER REPRESENTATIONS OVER MENZEL BOURGUIBA HAD BEEN RECEIVED FROM ANY SOURCE BUT THE USG. HE WAS TOLD BY MEJDOUB THAT NO OTHER NATO AMBASSADOR OR FOREIGN MINISTRY HAD SO FAR RAISED A QUESTION ON IT. TURKI CONCLUDED BY SAYING THAT TUNISIA, SINCE INDEPENDENCE, HAS ALWAYS ENJOYED A FRANK AND FRIENDLY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES. IT HAS BEEN A RELATIONSHIP BASED ON COMPLETE MUTUAL CONFIDENCE. WHY NOW DOES THE STATE DEPARMENT EXHIBIT THIS LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN TUNISIA? MULCAHY UNQUOTE VANCE

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